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Decisions Will Harm Party, Says Masani

MADRAS, June 2.

Mr. M. R. Masani, former General Secretary of the Swatantra Party, said here to-night that the decisions taken by the party would not help it to grow, but were likely to recoil on it and harm it.

Asked by newsmen why he had declined to get re-elected to the National Executive, Mr. Masani said the decisions of the National Executive in Madras were actuated by considerations of "short-term expediency, which had characterised the decisions of the last meeting of the Executive held in Delhi in April." In the General Council yesterday, efforts were made to rectify matters by way of two resolutions. But these were rejected by a majority of the members of the council. In the circumstances, there was "no alternative but to decline the offer of re-election to the Executive," he added.

About his future plans, Mr. Masani said the question he had to face was "what to do to save the party in such a situation." He believed that the task of those like Dr. K. M. Munshi, Vice-President of the party, himself and many others, who stood for ethical and disciplined methods, was to educate the members of the party and "to appeal to the idealism that exists within the party's ranks, so that the demoralisation, which has crept into the party, can be eliminated." This could be done more effectively by those who were not trammelled by the responsibility of administering the party's affairs.

He stated that the recent electoral reverses suffered by the party in Haryana in the by-election to the Dasua Parliamentary constituency and the Chomu Assembly constituency in Rajasthan, and the Panchayat elections in Gujarat provided the warning. If the party did not wake up to the need to put its house in order and restore its credibility, "the outlook for the party is bleak. I shall try with all my strength to prevent such a catastrophe," he added.

Census

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Resolutions on Masani's Resignation

Swat. Secretary's Clarification

MADRAS, June 2.

The General Secretary of the Swatantra Party, Mr. N. Dandekar told Pressmen to-day that Mr. M. R. Masani, who recently resigned from the National Executive of the Party, would be "an ordinary member of very high standing." He (Mr. Masani) wanted to assist the Party in every possible way.

Mr. Dandekar clarified that the two resolutions relating to the resignation of Mr. Masani, which were considered by the General Council yesterday were not resolutions sponsored by the National Executive, but were moved by individual members of the Council. They were defeated by "a substantial majority."

Parrying a barrage of questions from newsmen desiring to know what actually happened at yesterday's meeting, Mr. Dandekar bluntly said that he did not want to say "who said what." It was a closed meeting, and they particularly wanted a frank discussion, he said. Answering a question about to-day's meeting of the General Council, he said that things settled down.

Mr. Dandekar also declined to reveal the name of the members who moved the resolutions.

There were "hundreds of things on which he could ask Mr. Masani's assistance", like the mid-term elections in West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh training of workers, etc., he said. Mr. Masani would continue to be the Deputy Leader of the Swatantra Parliamentary Party.

REASON FOR POOR ATTENDANCE

Present at the meeting of the General Council were 69 members out of a total of 170. Mr. Dandekar was asked how he accounted for the poor attendance, to which he replied that it could be accounted for by the weather in Madras. He added that they had to meet here, though the weather was not pleasant, as they wanted the presence of Mr. C. Rajagopalachari.

A number of questions were asked about the absence of the Chairman, Mr. N. G. Ranga, and Mr. Dandekar replied that the Chairman did not come, as he wanted a full and frank discussion at this meet.

Asked if the Party was not at the cross-roads the General Secretary said, "We were at the cross-roads, but to-day's meeting was completely indicative of the fact that we have passed the cross-roads." He added: "This General Council meeting has got rid of a lot of poison from the body. We were engaged in our own cleaning up."

The next meeting of the General Council would be held at Bhubaneswar in the first week of October and Mr. Ranga would attend it, he said.

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Gujarat row still pesters Swatantra Party

"The Times of India" News Service

MADRAS, June 2.

THE general council of the Swatantra Party which concluded its two-day session here today, could not go a long way in patching up the differences in its leadership on Gujarat affairs.

On the contrary, the crisis appears to have deepened, and may continue to dog the party's steps for a long time to come.

Contradictory assessments of the situation were made by the party's general secretary, Mr. N. Dandekar, and Mr. M. R. Masani, at the conclusion of the general council meeting.

While Mr. Dandekar expressed satisfaction that the party, admittedly at the cross-roads before the Madras session, had "crossed over to right path now," Mr. Masani was emphatic that "the party is still at the cross-roads."

Mr. Dandekar claimed that the party crisis in Gujarat was a "closed chapter now," but, in Mr. Masani's view "it is a new situation."

Only 69 of the 170 members attended the two-day general council meetings. In the absence of the chairman of the party, Mr. N. G. Ranga, the vice-president, Prof. M. Ruthnaswami, presided over the meetings.

At his official briefing, at the conclusion of the general council meeting, Mr. Dandekar refused to disclose who had moved the two resolutions, defeated at yesterday's meeting, which might have paved the way for Mr. Masani's return to the national executive.

About the future role of Mr. Masani in the party, Mr. Dandekar said "he will be an ordinary member of a very high standing," adding that Mr. Masani would continue to be the deputy leader of the Swatantra Party in the Lok Sabha.

According to Mr. Dandekar, Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, who took an effective part in the deliberations, was "unhappy" that Mr. Masani had declined to accept election to the national executive.

"BAD SHAPE"

Mr. Masani, meanwhile, told newsmen shortly after Mr. Dandekar's press conference, that the fact that 100 members were absent at the general council meetings was "an indication of the party being in a bad shape."

About the "severe action" by the parliamentary board against some of the rebel members in Gujarat, Mr. Masani said "the main culprits have escaped, while small men have been punished."

Mr. Masani said the rejection of the two resolutions at the general council meeting, yesterday, left him with no alternative but to decline the offer of re-election to the executive seat vacated by him.

About his future Masani said he said he believed his task was "to educate and arouse the members of the party and to appeal to the considerable fund of idealism within the party ranks so that this demoralisation that has crept into the party may be eliminated."

He said that the party's recent reverses in the Haryana elections, the bye-election in Rajasthan and the panchayat elections in Gujarat, provided a warning.

The general council of the party also urged the Centre to postpone the mid-term elections in West Bengal. It said that this was not the time to subject the State once again to electioneering campaigns. "The prime need in West Bengal is a stable Government, and this is impossible so long as the communist parties are to carry on their war against our democratic institutions."

The general council endorsed the decision of its national executive that the party's legislators who defect should be expelled.

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Swatantra council

Resolutions in
favour of
Masani rejected

"The Times of India" News Service

MADRAS, June 1.

THE general council of the Swatantra Party, which began its two-day session here today under the shadow of a deepening crisis in the party over rebellion in the Gujarat unit, rejected two resolutions which, in effect, might have amounted to yielding to the demands made on the leadership by Mr. M. R. Masani and Mr. K. M. Munshi.

The first resolution, while appreciating the reasons which led Mr. Masani to resign from the national executive and the central Parliamentary board, held the view that these reasons had helped "in saving to some extent the harm done to the party's image by the defeat of the party's official candidate for election to the Rajya Sabha in March from Gujarat."

This resolution, in vague terms called upon the national executive "to create conditions to enable him (Mr. Masani) to accept the membership of these bodies again."

COMMITTEE SUGGESTED

The second resolution was more specific than the first in so far as it had apparently spelt out how best the "conditions" referred to should be created. The resolution called for the appointment of a committee "to inquire into certain allegations against the leadership of the party in Gujarat" and also proposed that disciplinary action be initiated against Mr. C. C. Desai, who, it was alleged, had admitted having worked against the official candidates.

Neither of the resolutions could be deemed to have met Mr. Masani's demands fully. Even so, had these resolutions been passed, Mr. Masani, who was present at today's meeting, might have been left with no choice other than reconsidering his tough stand on handling the crisis of discipline in the party ranks in Gujarat.

DANDEKAR'S MOVE FAILS

After the general council had rejected these resolutions, obviously, there was no question of Mr. Masani withdrawing his resignation. In point of fact, the general secretary, Mr. N. Dandekar proposed officially that "subject to Mr. Masani's consent, he be re-elected to the national executive of the party."

A press-note issued by the central office of the Swatantra Party, at the conclusion of today's three-hour closed door meeting, which was devoted exclusively to discuss Gujarat affairs, said that Mr. Masani declined to accept Mr. Dandekar's proposal. "But he assured the council that he would continue to work for the party both in Parliament and outside", the press-note said, as though the subject matter of Mr. Masani's resignation stands closed for the time being at least.

Mr. C. Rajagopalachari took an effective part in today's deliberations.

Out of about 170 members, only 69 attended today's sitting. In the absence of the chairman of the party, Mr. N. G. Ranga, who, incidentally, does not see eye to eye with Mr. Masani on the Gujarat crisis, the vice-chairman, Prof. M. Ruthnaswami presided.

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Masani Declines to Return to Swat. Executive

MADRAS, June 1.

At the meeting of the General Council of the Swatantra Party here to-day, Mr. M. R. Masani, M.P., declined consent to be re-elected to the National Executive and the Central Parliamentary Board from which he resigned following the indiscipline among the Gujarat Swatantra legislators that led to the defeat of the official candidate in the biennial elections for the Rajya Sabha.

However, Mr. Masani assured the General Council that he would continue to work for the party both in Parliament and outside.

Earlier, Mr. N. Dandekar, General Secretary, proposed at the meeting that subject to Mr. Masani's consent, he be re-elected to the National Executive.

The General Council discussed two resolutions from the National Executive, in connection with Mr. Masani's resignation. Prof. Ruthnaswami presided over the meeting.

The first resolution while appreciating the reasons leading to Mr. Masani's resignation from the National Executive and the Central Parliamentary Board felt it had helped to save to some extent the harm done to the party's image by the defeat of the official candidate in the elections to Rajya Sabha from Gujarat. It called upon the National Executive to create conditions to enable Mr. Masani to accept membership of the two bodies again.

The second resolution called for the appointment of a committee to enquire into allegations against the leadership of the Party in Gujarat and proposed that disciplinary action should be initiated against Mr. C. C. Desai, who was alleged to have worked against the official candidate.

Both the resolutions after considerable discussion were put to vote and declared lost.